



DATE: Wednesday, February 22, 2017

TO: Appropriations Committee

FROM: Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy Specialist, The Alliance

RE: H.B. 7027: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR. (State Agencies: DOC, CSSD/JUD)

Good evening Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy Specialist at The Alliance. The Alliance is Connecticut's statewide association of community nonprofits, which serve over 500,000 people each year and employ almost 14% of Connecticut's workforce.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on H.B. 7027: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Every year, more than half a million individuals depend on life-sustaining services provided by Connecticut's community nonprofits. As we face a \$1.7 billion shortfall in the FY18 budget, the governor and legislature have two choices to balance the budget: shift services into the community to continue providing services and move thousands of individuals off of waiting lists, or move forward with business as usual and cut vital services to thousands of the state's individuals and their families who are at greatest risk. We ask the Legislature to use the nonprofit provider community as a critical part to the solution of our state's fiscal crisis.

Community nonprofits have long supported the expansion of treatment programs and alternatives to incarceration, for those involved in the criminal justice system of the state. Most nonprofits that provide community justice services in Connecticut are primarily funded by the CT Department of Correction (DOC), and/or the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch. Community reentry programs have historically served as an extensive cost savings measure, which not only increases public safety, but strengthens the very fabric of our communities.

As the state continues to address the ongoing state budget crisis, it is essential to view the support of community-based, reentry services not as an expense, but rather, an investment in social justice, public safety and the overall welfare of our state. The 'Second Chance Society' must be more than an initiative. It must be a total and ongoing shift in philosophy, in order to become a reality. The nonprofits which partner with the state to provide these critical services stand ready to implement the necessary measures. However, the state must support this partnership with critical funding which covers the actual costs of these services.

As we convene this evening to discuss the Governor's proposed Budget, there are 3,850 citizens of our state who are receiving community supervision from nonprofit providers who contract with the DOC. This is an 11% increase from one year ago. Thousands more receive services through providers who contract with CSSD and the Judicial Branch. The State of Connecticut anticipates cost-savings of \$11.9 million in FY18 and \$13.4 million in FY19, within DOC, through reduced staff and operating costs. The state must modify the necessary funding and infrastructure to accommodate this shift and ensure a sustainable nonprofit provider community, necessary to achieve our collective goals.

Connecticut has long been considered a national model at the forefront of overarching criminal justice reform. Not only for the innovative approach the state has adopted - including the Second Chance Society Initiative and successfully repealing the death penalty - but in terms of best practices and real results, as reflected in national studies. Most criminal justice research focuses on the effectiveness of programs that seek to reduce recidivism by changing offender attitudes and behavior. Reductions in recidivism rates translate to breaking the cycle of crime and poverty that plagues so many communities across the nation.

A critical component to the successful reintegration of these individuals post-incarceration is the self esteem, economic stability and growth that is achieved through gainful employment. It is important to note that the impact of any reduction in funding for Community Justice Services which contract with DOC or CSSD, is amplified by reductions to reentry services in other areas of the Governor's Proposed Budget. For example, current, proposed reductions to re-entry-related employment programs funded by the Department of Labor, will negatively affect the ability of formerly incarcerated individuals to gain meaningful employment break the cycle of poverty and recidivism.

With the anticipated decrease in offender population within the DOC facilities in 2017 and beyond, there will be a corresponding need for additional supervised placements within the community justice provider network of services. It is essential that the state modify the necessary funding and infrastructure to accommodate this shift and ensure continued success. The following are recommendations and points of consideration specific to DOC and CSSD:

Department of Correction (DOC):

A number of cuts will have a negative effect on providers and the people and communities they serve. We respectfully ask the Committee to restore this funding:

- Community Support Services are reduced by \$1 million in each fiscal year (from \$34.8 million to \$33.8 million.) Support and expansion of Reentry Programs have historically served as an extensive cost savings measure, which not only increases public safety, but strengthens the very fabric of our communities.
- The budget includes a reduction for Inmate Medical Services due to the declining prison population, (\$3 million in each fiscal year.) We recommend that the state reinvest a portion of these cost savings in the nonprofit providers who have experienced additional reductions to their resources by implementing the medical care which has shifted to the community in the absence of the UConn/Correctional Managed Health Care model.

Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch:

A number of cuts will have a negative effect on providers and the people and communities they serve. We respectfully ask the Committee to restore this funding:

- The holdbacks in fiscal year 2017 were particularly devastating to nonprofits and the people they serve, resulting in layoffs, program closures and service disruption across state departments. We ask the legislature not to annualize them into the next biennium.
- Alternatives to Incarceration in the Community: Funding of \$50 million in FY 2018 and FY 2019 reflects a *reduction of \$3 million in each fiscal year.
- Juvenile Alternative Incarceration: Funding of \$21 million in FY 2018 and FY 2019 reflects a *reduction of \$5 million in both fiscal years.
- * It is important to note that these are not new reductions in funding to alternative sanctions programs in the Governor's proposed FY 18 and FY 19 budget. All reductions noted are those enacted in the FY 17 budget. However, in total, the cuts to programs as a result of the various rescissions in FY16, legislative reductions and unallocated lapses assigned to the Judicial Branch totaled over \$27 million. These

reductions are repeated in the FY18 and FY19 budgets proposed by the Governor, and result in an overarching, negative impact on the system of services.

Once again, we urge your continued support of the Second Chance Society Initiatives. However, it is critical to acknowledge that the state's ability to effectively achieve any of the goals set forth is directly related to the strength and viability of the nonprofit provider network of Community Justice Services.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

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